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HHS and FDA Announce New Tools to Help Consumers Use the Nutrition Facts Label

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) in HHS's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced the availability of two new learning tools to help consumers use the Nutrition Facts label to choose nutritious foods and achieve healthy weight management.

The tools are *Make Your Calories Count*, a Web-based learning program, and a new *Nutrition Facts Label* brochure.

"The risk of many diseases and health conditions may be reduced through preventive actions and a culture of wellness deters or diminishes debilitating and costly health events. Individual health care is built on a foundation of responsibility for personal wellness. We at HHS are pleased to introduce both the new web-based program and the brochure, which contribute to the nutrition focus of the department's prevention priority," said Dr. John Agwunobi, HHS Assistant Secretary for Health.

The Web-based program is part of FDA's response to the recommendations of its Obesity Working Group, in the group's 2004 report, *Calories Count*. The program was based on recommendations in the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The *Dietary Guidelines* are the foundation of the federal government's science-based advice designed to help Americans choose diets that meet nutrient requirements without exceeding calorie needs, promote health, support active lives, and reduce the risk of chronic disease.

"This learning program provides a quick and simple way to educate consumers on how to use the nutrition facts label," said Dr. Andrew C. von Eschenbach, Acting FDA Commissioner. "By making it easier for consumers to understand the Nutrition Facts label, the FDA is helping them make quick and informed food choices that contribute to lifelong healthy eating habits."

Make Your Calories Count is an interactive online learning program that is also available in a downloadable format. It is designed to help consumers understand and use the Nutrition Facts label to plan a healthy diet while managing calorie intake. The program guide features an animated character called "Labelman" who expertly leads the viewer through a series of exercises on the food label. The program includes exercises to help consumers explore the relationship between serving sizes and calories, while they learn how to limit certain nutrients and get enough of others. For simplicity, the program presents two nutrients that should be limited (saturated fat and sodium) and two nutrients that should be consumed in adequate amounts (fiber and calcium).

Consumers can use the Nutrition Facts label to take control of their caloric intake and weight and to make healthy food choices, *if* they know how. This program will show consumers how, in part, by explaining what serving sizes, percentages, and daily values mean and how to use them. This program is available for online use and in a downloadable format at www.cfsan.fda.gov/labelman.

FDA is making available a new downloadable *Nutrition Facts Label* brochure that is targeted for use by consumers. The brochure can also be used by health professionals to teach people how to make healthier food choices. The brochure describes how consumers can use the Nutrition Facts label as they shop and plan meals. The brochure includes information that will help consumers understand the relationship between calories and serving size, which may help them use the label to manage their intake of calories. This brochure is available at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/lab-gen.html>.

These new learning tools are part of a commitment by HHS and FDA to help reduce the number of overweight persons and obesity in America.

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